

REMARKS

The rejection of claim 19 under 35 USC Sec. 112, first paragraph has been obviated by cancelling this claim.

The rejection of claim 1 under 35 USC Sec. 102(b) has been obviated by revising claim 1 so that it more clearly distinguishes the invention over the Kanada '569 patent. First, claim 1 has been revised to specify that the frame includes "only two leg plates..." By contrast, if the lower and upper casings 104 and 105 disclosed in the '569 patent are read as being "leg plates" as the Examiner has done in the last Office Action, then the frame 12 of the '569 patent would include four leg plates 18, 20, 104 and 105. Second, claim 1 has been amended to recite that "the webbing is disposed between the two leg plates." By contrast, the webbing 24 of the Kanada '569 patent is not disposed between the lower and upper casings 104 and 105. Instead, the webbing 24 is disposed between the leg plates 18 and 20. Finally, claim 1 recites that "all of [the] clutch is disposed between said leg plates..." Support for this amendment is present on, for example, page 43, first full paragraph as follows:

By disposing the clutch 90 between the leg plate 16 and the leg plate 18 of the frame 12 as described above, as shown in Fig. 1, the motor 60 and the gears 64 through 70, which structure the driving force transmitting mechanism, can be placed between the leg plate 16 and the leg plate 18 of the frame 12. As a result, the webbing retractor 10 can be made to be compact as compared with a structure in which the motor 60 and the gears 64 through 70 are disposed at the outer side of the frame 12.

It is abundantly clear to even those who are not skilled in the art that this section, when read in conjunction with Figure 1, means that all of the clutch is disposed between the leg plates. As the retractor disclosed in the Kanada '569 patent neither discloses nor suggests a retractor having a frame with only two leg plates and a clutch, wherein all of the clutch is disposed between the leg plates, amended claim 1 is clearly patentable over this reference. As none of the other reference cited by the Examiner either discloses or suggests the invention recited in amended claim 1 (i.e. the Rogers '604 patent), claim 1 is clearly patentable.

Moreover, applicant would point out that this is an important distinction between the invention and the prior art, as set forth in the second full paragraph of page 42 as follows:

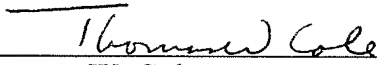
By placing the clutch 90 between the leg plates 16, 18, the motor 60 can be disposed between the leg plates 16, 18. Therefore, the motor 60 and the clutch 90 can be set at positions which are relatively close to one another. The structure of the decelerating mechanism such as the gears 64 through 70 can thereby be simplified. In this way as well, the webbing retractor 10 can be made to be compact, and the cost thereof can be reduced.

As claims 2-18 are dependent on claim 1, these claims are likewise patentable. Additionally, claim 15 is further patentable over the Kanada '569 patent for its recitation that the ends of the spool are rotatably mounted in the leg plates, drawing a further distinction between the upper and lower casings 104, 105 of Kanada.

Finally, claim 20 includes two of the previously discussed new limitations of amended claim 1, and further recites that "all of the driving mechanism is disposed between said leg plates." As none of these three new limitations is present in any of the art of record, claim 20 is clearly patentable.

Now that all of the claims are believed to be patentable, the prompt issuance of a Notice of Allowance is hereby earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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